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ABSTRACT

The unit on language is designed for presentation to middle school, junior high, and senior high gifted students. Information on objectives, materials, and presentation guidelines is presented for eight lessons on the following topics: purposes and process of language, successful/unsuccessful communication, precise/imprecise communication, connotation, image and language style, and creativity in language. (CI)

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LANGUAGE

A Study Unit Designed for Education of the GIFTED in the Humanities and the Arts

by

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This Unit has been prepared as part of Project ALPHA's efforts to design and develop innovative and challenging materials for Gifted Education. The Project Staff has endeavored to produce units that: (1) provide a strong interdisciplinary blend of the content and strategies of the Humanities and Arts; (2) foster both critical and creative thinking; (3) provide stimulating and enriching experiences for Gifted students; and (4) encourage the use of multiple teaching methods and styles.

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ALPHA UNIT

LANGUAGE

OBJECTIVES:

1. To encourage students to analyze the purposes and processes of language.
2. To encourage students to be creative in their utilization of language.
3. To develop an attitude of critical evaluation and aesthetic sensitivity to language.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER:

This unit is designed for presentation in middle, junior high, and senior high schools. It is composed of a number of lessons prepared by the ALPHA staff and a variety of commercially produced materials which lend themselves to flexible adaptation on the part of the teacher. Choices of materials, techniques, problems, etc. will depend on the student audience, time to be spent on the unit, depth and breadth of study, etc. The teacher is free to tailor the design of the unit to meet the needs and objectives of specific student groups. As an aid to program design, the following is presented as a sample unit. For details, see enclosed lesson sheets.

Lesson Number	Approximate Time	Lesson Title
1	1 1/2 - 2 1/2 hrs.	Purposes & Process of Language
2	1 1/2 - 2 hrs.	Successful/Unsuccessful Communication
3	1 1/2 - 2 hrs.	Precise/Imprecise Communication
4	1 1/2 hrs.	Connotation
5	2 - 2 1/2 hrs.	Image and Language Style
6 - 8	3 - 7 hrs.	Creativity in Language (Zany Brainies, Ditto Poems, Snowballs, Etc.)

LANGUAGE

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

Language, Signs, and Symbols: How Man Communicates (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York.

Speak Up: Skills of Oral Communication (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York.

Personal Communication: Gestures, Expressions and Body English (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York

Communication Skills: Learning to Listen and Express Yourself (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York

Learning to See and Understand: Developing Visual Literacy (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York

Man as Symbol Maker: Creating New Meanings (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York

Creative Writing: Imagination and Self-Expression (3 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York

The Story of British English, J. N. Hook. Scott Foresman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1974.

People Say Things Different Ways, J. N. Hook. Scott, Foresman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1974.

Language in Thought and Action, S. I. Hayakawa. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1978.

Contact: A Textbook in Applied Communications, C. Jeriel Howard, Richard Francis Tracz, Coramae Thomas. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1974.

Literature with a Message: Protest and Propaganda, Satire and Social Comment (2 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York.

How to Get the Most from What You Read: Making Judgments and Drawing Conclusions (3 parts), Center for Humanities, Inc., White Plains, New York

A Time to Speak, Howard Stein. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1974.

NonVerbal Communication, Louis Forsdale. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1974.

Speaking Of...Communication/Interpretation/Theater Teacher's Resource Book, Bud Beyer, Charlotte Lee, Charles Wilkinson. Scott, Foresman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1975.

Speaking Of...Communication/Interpretation/Theater, Charles A. Wilkinson. Scott, Foresman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1975.

The Humanities, Louise Dudley, Austin Faricy, and James G. Rice. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1978.

Communicate, Stuart Chase. McDougal, Littel and Company, Evanston, Illinois.

The Music Man, Original Soundtrack, Warner Bros. Records, Inc.

UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Purposes and Processes of Language

Objectives: To examine and analyze the purposes of language.

To investigate and evaluate the processes of language.

Materials: Language, Signs and Symbols: How Man Communicates, Part 1 and Teacher's Guide

Presentation: - Introduce the unit by outlining the goals and objectives of the unit and discussing the benefits of studying Language.

- Show "Language, Signs and Symbols", part 1

- Discuss the following:

  - What are the purposes of language? (communication, self-expression)

  - What are the elements of language? (sounds, words, meanings, word order, tone, denotation and connotation, accompanying body language, context, etc.)

  - How do we learn words?

  - How do words get their meanings?

  - How do we create new words? (Out of old words, by combining old words, etc.)

  - In what ways is language a living, changing thing?

  - Given the answers to the above questions, discuss why successful communication, while it apparently occurs frequently, is an amazing accomplishment.

- With older students, one may ask the more philosophical questions: Does successful communication ever occur? How can we judge if successful communication has taken place? Discuss the quotation of F. L. Lucas, which accompanies slide 27 of the slide show:

"Words can be more powerful, and more treacherous, than we sometimes suspect; communications more difficult than we may think. We are all serving life sentences of solitary confinement within our own bodies; like prisoners, we have, as it were, to tap in awkward code to our fellow men in their neighboring cells."

UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Successful/Unsuccessful Communication (Password)

Objectives:

1. To give students a concrete understanding of the nature of the communication process by observing and partaking in successful and unsuccessful communication.
2. To emphasize the value of gestures and body language in the communication process.
3. To foster and develop a greater capacity for listening.
4. To help the students acquire a sensitivity to correct and incorrect interpretation.

Materials: 3 x 5 index cards.

Procedure:

1. Each student will compose a list of 10 - 15 words (excluding proper nouns) which is to be passed into the teacher. The words should then be printed on index cards, one word to a card. The cards should be held by the teacher.
2. The teacher selects the teams which consist of two pairs of students.
3. The two teams are seated at the front of the classroom so they will be facing the rest of the class, with their backs to the blackboard.
4. The teacher chooses the word to be used and writes it on the blackboard in order for the class to see it. One student from each team is allowed to see the word. This student gives clues to his corresponding team member. The clues are then given alternatively by each team. Hand and facial gestures are encouraged.
5. If during the game a student in the class has a clue he may indicate so by raising his hand. The team member giving the clues can then give up his turn to this student.

6. A student should be designated to keep a running score on the board, 10 points for getting the word on the first clue, 9 on the second, etc. The first team to reach 21 points is the winner. Another challenging team can now be selected.

7. It is suggested that the teacher conclude the game a short time before the end of the period to allow time for a game analysis. The analysis should be structured around questions which will provoke discussions about the communication process. Sample questions:

    1. Is playing the game easy or hard for you? Why?
    2. How did you feel about using hand, body, or facial gestures? Were they helpful? Why?
    3. Which elements effect or cause successful/unsuccessful communication? (The teacher may ask the students to relate examples from their own recent experiences of communication failures. Students should be encouraged to analyze the causes of the breakdowns. Were they problems with definitions, interpretations, connotations etc.?
    4. Did class members differ from the adults you have observed playing the game on T.V.?
    5. Why do you think the game, PASSWORD has been so successful on T.V. for so many years?
    6. What kind of words gave the players the most difficulty? Why?
    7. What kind of clues were most helpful? Why?
    8. Which elements effect or cause correct/incorrect interpretation?

GUIDELINES FOR THE TEACHER:

The teacher should ensure an atmosphere in which the classroom audience is orderly and quiet. Shouting out answers or clues would be a cause for disqualifying the word.

UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Precise/Imprecise Communication (Control Tower)

Objectives:
1. To encourage students to recognize the importance of precision in verbal directions.
2. To develop an awareness of how often and how easily imprecision slips into our use of language.
3. To encourage students to explore word terms which relate to body movements.
4. To encourage students to evaluate and analyze the use of language in problem solving situations.

Materials:
Classroom furniture and objects
Stop-watch
Blindfold

Procedure: Explain the importance of precise directions. Introduce the game Control Tower as an exercise that demands precise verbal directions and the use of detailed language.

Read these directions to the students --

This is a competitive game based on skill and speed. You will be put into teams of two. (Teacher can designate teams or allow students to choose partners). One member of each pair is blindfolded and the other responsible for giving verbal directions to get his partner through an obstacle course. Each pair will be timed from start to finish with five additional seconds added to the time anytime obstacles or objects in the playing area are touched. A penalty of fifteen seconds will also be added if a player purposely touches objects to go faster. The object of the game is to go through the course without touching anything.

Every team will have to follow the same path. (Teacher should now walk off the designated path.) The opposing teams will set-up obstacles before each run and after the upcoming player is blindfolded.

1. Obstacles must be safe.
2. There will be a minimum number of obstacles (set by teacher).
3. The blindfolded person must be able to get through an obstacle without touching.
4. Obstacles can be of different degrees of difficulty and size.
5. For obstacles you may use...(teacher designate what objects can be used) and yourselves.

After every team has run the course one time the players will switch positions for the second run. Scores will be tallied for both runs and the team with the lowest score time will win.

Additional Guidelines for the Teacher:

Teacher should be close and aware of any unsafe situation; it is recommended that the teacher walk along with the blindfolded student monitoring directions and movements. Stress the need for safety when students are designing the obstacles so as to eliminate any chance of injury.

After students have played the game ask them to reflect and respond to what they experienced. Explore ideas about the problems they encountered, the need for a precise use and choice of words, and other experiences gained from this activity, such as team work, trust, co-operation, etc.

UNIT: Language

LESSON: Connotation

Objectives: To teach students to recognize that words express meaning with their connotation as well as their definition (denotation).

Note: The connotations of a word are the allied meanings of associated ideas that are called to mind when the word is used. For example, the cowboy herds cattle, but the word "cowboy" connotes youth, bravery, adventure and romance; "cattle herder" is merely a person who herds cattle.

The word "father" has always had the same meaning: the male parent. Its connotations are love, kindliness, protection, greater experience, guidance, and wisdom. However, not all male parents show these qualities. Some fathers are cruel, unkind or foolish. Thus, if one wants to make it clear that a father is of the latter kind, that fact must be stated definitely or else the stereotyped connotation will probably be inferred by the reader or listener.

(Ref., The Humanities, p. 275.)

Materials: "Seventy-Six Trombones", The Music Man Record Album

"Trouble", The Music Man Record Album

(See "Suggested Materials" for details.)

Presentation: - Listen to the song "Trouble" from The Music Man.

- As a group, select the words in the song which demonstrate negative connotation. List them on the blackboard.

- Then listen to "Seventy-Six Trombones" and select the words of positive connotation, writing this second list beside the negatives.

- Discuss the comparisons. Discuss euphemisms.

- Ask each student to make a list of words and phrases of positive, negative or neutral connotation as they relate to specific persons or situations. Try especially to include words which would have different connotation in different contexts. For example:

Word	Context	Connotation
Radiation	Cured cancer patient	Positive
Radiation	No-Nukes demonstrator	Negative
Person	Feminist consciousness	Neutral
Dessert	Hungry person	Positive
Dessert	Weight-watcher's group	Negative

UNIT: Language

LESSON: Image and Language Style

Objectives: To help students to understand that our language presents an image of ourselves to the world, in addition to conveying specific messages.

To give students practice in creative language technique of point-of-view narration.

Materials: Selected and tape recorded excerpts of famous personalities with strong verbal language style. Example: John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Tony Randall, Gloria Steinem, Winston Churchill.

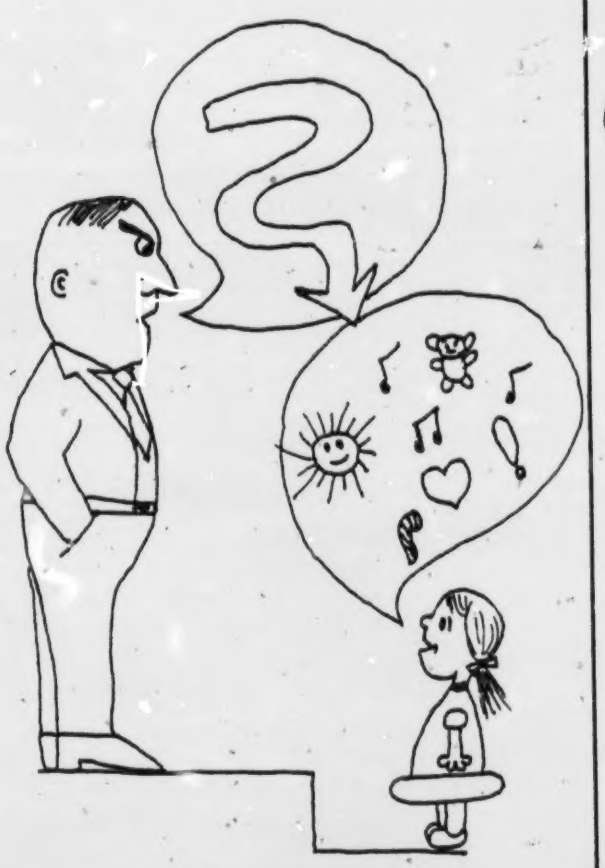
Selected written paragraphs by famous personalities with strong literary language style. For example: Mark Twain, Drew Pearson, Art Buchwald, Erma Bombeck.

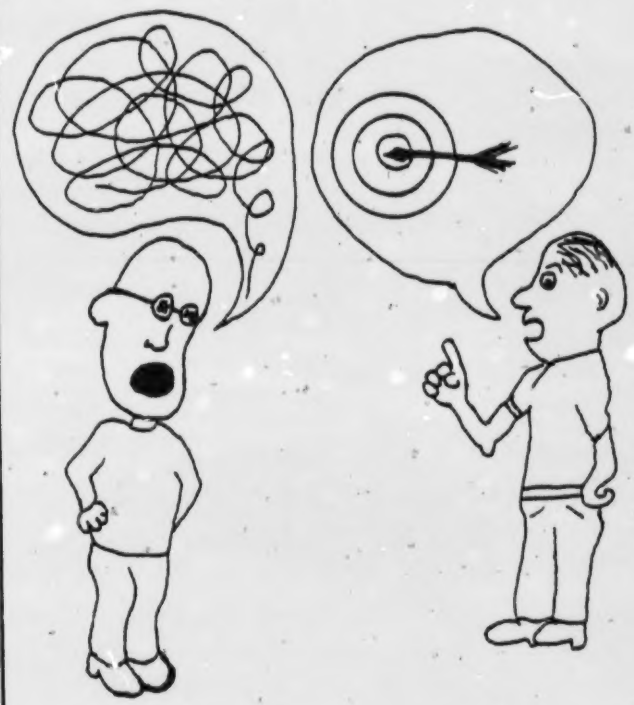
Presentation: - Present the written and recorded excerpts.

- Discuss and analyze the styles reflected in the language of the selected personalities. Have the students relate the language style to the personal images of the speakers/authors.

- Have the students select an event (a recent sporting event or current news, etc.). Have each student describe the event in a paragraph of 75 to 100 words. Then ask each student to describe the same event in a second paragraph to be written in a style which would reflect the personal image of: a scientist, absent-minded professor, "dumb-blonde", country yokel, hippie, politician, psychiatrist, hard-hat or other stereotyped personality. Share resulting paragraphs.

- Suggested Activity: Have students produce a graphic representation of a language style. The student may choose a famous personality, past or present, a stereotyped character (society dowager, drill sergeant, lawyer, politician, mortician, etc.). The student may use such techniques as political cartoon, Steinberg drawings (see examples next page), collages or other creative media.





UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Ditto Poem

Objectives:
1. To examine a new form of poetry.
2. To explore the varied possibilities in poetic design.
3. To encourage creativity and self expression through poetry.

Materials: Samples of ditto poetry

Presentation: - Introduce this poetry technique by displaying examples of ditto poems. Discuss the style of the poems and what makes them different from other poetry forms. Note that the poetry design starts with one worded line; The following lines are ditto marks which selectively re-use words from the first line to express a different idea or meaning. Explain that one or many words can be used and re-used in each dittoed line. Ask the students to reflect on words and ideas that would fit this poetry technique and design their own ditto poem. Suggest (1) starting with one word and building up or (2) disecting a single statement, line of a song, etc., to begin the process. These are only two suggestions; encourage the students to develop their own techniques within this poetic form.

Notes to Teacher:
1. Try designing your own ditto poem; this will lend to your understanding of the technique.
2. This activity requires time for reflection; allow plenty of time for the students to develop their ideas.
3. After the students have shared their poems, the teacher should conduct a group discussion on the poetry form, creativity, student approaches and techniques, the meaning of the experience, etc.

UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Ditto Poem (Examples)

The Nine Ages of Man*

(A poem on one line, to be read aloud)

Not old enough to know better
" " " " " "
" " " " "
" " " "
" " "
" " "
" "
"

F. Emerson Andrews

Life Flows Within

Try to realize it is all within yourself
"
" " "
" " " " " "
" " " "
" " " "
" " " "
" " "
" " "
" "

Debra Rementer

*"The Nine Ages of Man" by F. Emerson Andrews from Saturday Review, Vol. LV, No. 35, August 26, 1972. Copyright 1972 Saturday Review Inc. Reprinted by permission of Saturday Review/World.

UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Zany Brainies

Objectives: Students will utilize analytic skills when trying to decipher Zany Brainies.

Students will use creativity and imagination to design new Zany Brainies.

Materials: white paper
colored construction paper
magic markers
scissors
glue

Presentation: - Explain that Zany Brainies are words or letters whose arrangement or physical relationship to one another illustrates a familiar phrase or saying. Have students decipher some Zany Brainies in order to demonstrate what they are, and to provide examples of various forms. Encourage students to design their own Zany Brainies and share them with their classmates for deciphering. This will continue the analytic process while simultaneously stimulating creativity.

- Wrap-up: Complete lesson with questions such as: What process did you use in deciphering the Zany Brainies? What process did you use when you designed new ones? What did you learn? How can this help you?

- Additional Ideas: Encourage students to post their Zany Brainies on the class bulletin board and to add new ones that they develop outside of class. This has the effect of continuing to stimulate students' imagination and allowing the lesson to continue beyond the school time directly allocated.

- Reminder to Teacher: Please refer to studen worksheet for complete directions on completing Zany Brainies.

Reference: Language Arts Games, Hurwitz/Goddard, Scholastic Book Services, N.Y., 1972.
Games Magazine, January/February 1980 Issue.

UNIT: LANGUAGE

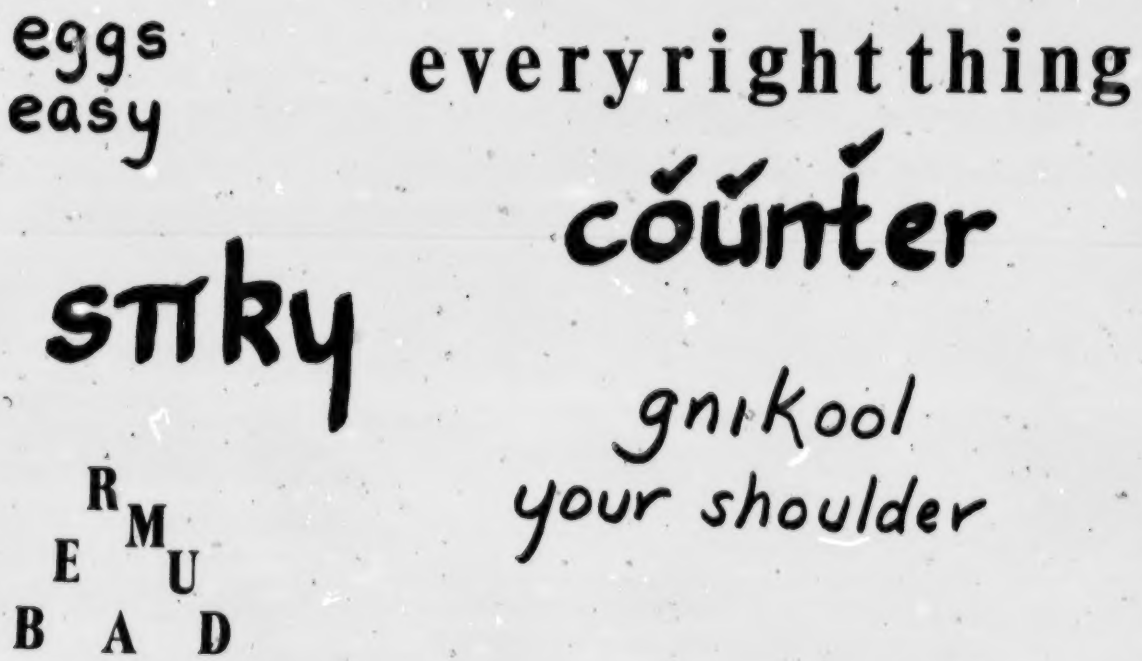
LESSON: Zany Brainies (Student Worksheet)

Zany Brainies are words or letters whose arrangement or relationship to one another illustrates a familiar phrase. For example,

BLOOD WATER

stands for "Blood is thicker than water." Below are some examples of other Zany Brainies. See if you can translate or decipher them. Then design some of your own.

You may use only words, letters, numbers, punctuation marks, and mathematical symbols. No illustrations are allowed! The message should be revealed by how the elements are physically arranged or designed on the page. You may use different kinds of print, colors, etc. Once Zany Brainies are completed and accepted, they can be mounted on construction paper for display.



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UNIT: LANGUAGE

LESSON: Snowball

Objectives: To encourage creativity in language.

To explore a creative language form.

To provide students with the opportunity to expand vocabulary usuage and understanding.

Materials: Paper, pencil.

Activity: The SNOWBALL is an OuLiPo device for creative use of language.

Instructions: Develop a meaningful message poem, statement, etc., using words which are progressively one letter longer than the previously used word. The elements of a Snowball should be sensible and grammatically correct, such that, when read, the Snowball would be a good clear sentence.

The example below, developed by a member of the ALPHA staff, contains a progression up to a fifteen-letter word.

I
go
now-
feet
fleet,
flying
dancing
prancing-
sprightly,
laughingly,
disarmingly
enthusiastic-
imperturbably
discriminately
uncommunicative.

Reference: Time, January 10, 1977, p. 55.
(OuLiPo is an abbreviation for Ouvroir de Litterature Potentielle, Workshop of Potential Literature, a group of Parisian writers and scientists, interested in the creation of new literary structures.)